Opportunities and Action

Changing Supports in Ontario For People Who Have a Developmental Disability

Plain Language Version

Ministry of Community and Social Services
May 2006

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Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services' website at www.mcss.gov.on.ca and click on **"Transforming Developmental Services"**

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Ontario

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What is this paper for?

In 2004, the Ontario government said they would be changing supports for people who have a developmental disability.
They want people with a developmental disability and their families to have a better life and be safe, active members of their communities.

Many of the services for people who have a developmental disability are funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Examples are supports during the day, some housing supports, and relief for family caregivers.

The ministry wanted to find out what kind of changes people wanted. They talked to:

- people with a developmental disability
- family members
- groups that work with people who have a developmental disability.

After they heard from many people and groups, the government decided that it will make some changes. You can read about these changes on the next pages.

Please help to plan the changes.

The government wants your help to plan how to make the changes. They also want to know if you think there should be more changes.

You can help by talking about the questions in this paper. Then you can send your ideas to the ministry.

What does the Ontario government believe?

The government has a new vision for what developmental services should look like. It is based on what people in the community said they wanted. The vision is based on six big ideas:

1. Citizenship

All people living in Ontario should have the same rights. The government wants to support people with a developmental disability to be full citizens. That means supporting them to do things like:

- work or go to school
- have a home
- take part fully in community life
- make their own choices and plan their lives.

2. Fairness

People who have the same needs should get the same level of service and support, no matter where they live.

People with a developmental disability should have the same chance to do things in the community as other people do.

They should get supports that meet their needs. The supports should be right for their age, their disability, and their culture. 'Culture' means things like the language you speak.

3. Portable and flexible funding

Government money pays for many of the supports that people with a developmental disability receive. That money should go with them if they move to another community in Ontario. It should be 'portable'.
Each person has their own needs. People should be able to decide for themselves who will provide the supports they need and how those supports will be provided. The money should be 'flexible'.

4. Safety

People with a developmental disability have the right to be safe. For some people, that means having well-trained staff where they live. The staff have to help prevent problems and teach people how to be safe.

People with a developmental disability also have a right to privacy, and staff should respect this. There should be a balance between the right to privacy and the right to safety.

5. Accountability

Groups that work with people who have a developmental disability get money from the government. They have to account for that money. That means they have to show how they spent it and show they are doing a good job.

There have to be ways to prove to the government that the money is being used for the kinds of supports the money was meant to provide.

6. Sustainability

The government wants to support people based on their needs. But there are limits on how much money it has. They will make a plan for 10 years and use the plan to manage the money better. That will help to 'sustain' the changes.

These changes will also last longer because they make the roles much clearer for all the people involved:

- the person with a developmental disability
- their family
- the people who work with them
- the government.

What changes is the government making?

These are the changes that the government has decided to make so far. The changes are based on what the Ministry of Community and Social Services heard when it asked people in the community for advice.

The changes are in these areas:

- Planning
- Being eligible for supports and services
- Applying for supports and services
- Getting access to supports and services
- Having more choice about how you get and spend your support money.

Planning

Things change as we go through life, and that is why people make plans. The government wants to help people who have a developmental disability make their own plans.

Planning means deciding:

- what you want (your goals) and
- what you need (your supports).

You could have goals for things like:

- working or going to school or
- how and where you want to live.

This is sometimes called 'person-directed' or 'independent' planning. 'Person-directed' means the plan is just for you. 'Independent' means that the plan should help you to make the most of your strengths and live a good life in the community.

The government is going to provide someone to help you, if you and your family decide you need help to make a plan. These people will be called 'independent planners'. The planners will know all about the supports you can find in your community. If there are gaps, the planner will help you find ways to get the things you need.

Being eligible for supports and services

People who have a developmental disability are eligible to receive supports and services.

But what does 'developmental disability' mean? People told the government that the meaning of this term is not clear enough. That makes it hard to know who is eligible.

The government will ask a group of experts to work out a way to describe who is eligible for supports and services. Then everyone can agree.

Applying for supports and services

Ontario is a big province. Right now, the way that people apply for supports and services is not the same from place to place. It should be the same, because that is more fair.

The government is going to design a way to apply that is the same everywhere in Ontario.

Getting access to supports and services

In Ontario, many groups offer supports and services to people with a developmental disability and their families. Often, people have to go to a lot of different places to get the things they need.

This takes a lot of time. People have to tell their stories over and over again. It is hard on people and their families. Also, it is not fair, because not all groups do things the same way.

The government wants to make a new system. Each community will have a 'single point of access'. That means that you will only have to go to one place to:

- Find out if you are eligible for supports and services
- Apply for supports and services
- Get what you need
- Get advice
- Keep a record of your support needs

Having more choice about using support money

The government is working on ways to give people more choice about using support money. Right now, about 370 groups in Ontario offer supports and services. The government gives them money to do this.

Some people told the government that they would rather choose the supports they need and pay for them directly. For instance, they might want to hire their own support person to help them with learning a job. Or, they could decide to use staff from a group that provides supports and services to help them.

Should there be more changes?

When the government talked to people the first time, they heard a lot of good ideas. They want to hear more about these ideas and think about including them in the changes.

Please think about changes you want to see in these areas:

1. Being included in your community
2. Making it easier for the people who help you to have a rest from time to time
3. Ways of living when you decide to live on your own or with friends
4. Planning for changes in your life
5. Helping people who have special needs
6. Helping families with money issues like taxes, saving, and making a will
7. Setting standards so that we can keep making supports and services better

On the next pages are some questions to help you think about what you want to say.

You do not have to answer all the questions. Please tell us about the things that are important to you.

1. Being included in your community

To be an active and included member of your community, you may need some help and support. For instance, when you are ready to leave school, you may need a mentor. The mentor is an older person who has a developmental disability. They can teach you about their experience in the community.

Your community needs to learn new things too. People need to learn how to include you. They need to learn about the things that you can do. They need to value the things they can learn from you.

Sometimes, people need cultural supports to live in the community. For instance, they may need things to be in their language. Sometimes people need special supports for a woman's needs or for a man's needs.

Questions:

- What makes it hard for a person with a developmental disability to be active and included in the community?
- What would make it easier for you to be active and included?
- Who should make these changes?
- How should they do it?

Extra questions you can answer if you want to:

- What can people with a developmental disability do to make it easier to be included in the community?

- What role should their families play?

- What role should groups that work with people who have a developmental disability play?

- What role should other groups play, such as schools, businesses, and places of worship?

- What role should the government play?

- Do you know about some good work people did to help people with a developmental disability be better included in the community? Please tell us about it.

- Are there special things about your culture that people should know to help you be more included? Please tell us about them.

2. Making it easier for the people who help you to have a rest from time to time

You may have special friends or family members who do a lot to help you. They work hard, and sometimes they need a rest.

The government has some supports to help them get a rest. For instance, there are places where paid staff will take care of you while your loved one has a rest. This support is called 'respite' support for your loved ones.

Questions:

- What kind of respite support does your family need?
- Should there be some new kinds of respite? What would they be like?
- What makes it hard to get respite support?

3. Ways of living when you decide to live on your own or with friends

When people with a developmental disability leave home, there are many ways they can live in the community. Some people live on their own with some help and support. Some people live in group homes. Some people live with another family.

The government wants you to have more choices about how to live when you leave home. For instance, your family might be able to team up with other families to buy a place where you can live with other adults.

Questions:

- What would make it easier to live on your own?
- What would make living in a group home better?
- What would make living with another family better?
- Do you know about some new ways for people with a developmental disability to live? Please tell us about them.

Extra questions you can answer if you want to:

- What makes it hard for you and your family to create new ways of living?
- What should the government do to support new ways of living?
- How can we do a better job of protecting people who do not have family supports to stay safe from things like abuse?

4. Planning for changes in your life

People go through many changes in life. For instance, leaving school is a big change. Leaving home is a big change. Getting older and becoming a senior is a big change.

The best thing to do about change is to make a good plan. This helps you to say what you want and get what you need.

Having a mentor also helps when you make a change. Mentors are people who can tell you what they know. For instance, someone could tell you what it is like to live in the community.

Supports are important when your life changes. Many supports come from groups in the community. The government is looking at new ways for you to choose your supports.

Questions:

- Have you left school? What kind of help did you and your family need to make the change?
- Will you be leaving school? What kind of help do you and your family need to make the change?
- Are you getting older? What kind of supports will you need as a senior?

Extra questions you can answer if you want to:

- Who should help you plan for the changes in your life?
- Do you know people who found a good way to go through a change? Please tell us what they did.

5. Helping people who have special needs

Some people who have a developmental disability have other problems too. Some people have behaviour problems, such as fighting. Some people have mental health problems and might hurt themselves or get in trouble. These are called 'special needs'.

People with special needs should get extra support so that everyone can be safe. They need well-trained staff. They may need special places to live. They need good health care, even if they live far away from the hospital.

Also, if they get in trouble, the police need to know how to help them. The staff, social workers, doctors, and police all need to talk, so that everyone can help.

Questions:

- Are there supports that are missing for people with special needs?
- What should we do?

An extra question you can answer if you want to:

- How can we make it easier for the staff, social workers, doctors and police to work together to help people with special needs?

6. Helping families with money issues like taxes, saving, and making a will

When a family member has a disability, many people have to worry about money. Sometimes there are extra costs. Or, there may be lost income because someone is staying home to help.

The Ontario government wants to find more ways to give families a financial break. First, the government could make it easier for families to learn about financial planning.

For instance, a will is a way to plan what will happen to your house and your money when you die. Parents can make a will so that their child will have enough when they are gone. They can set up a 'trust' so that someone helps the child take care of the money.

Another idea is to have a special savings plan, called a Registered Disability Savings Plan. Family and friends could put savings in the plan. They would get a tax break. Later, the person who has the developmental disability would be able use the money to live. The government would let them keep the money, even if they were also getting social assistance.

Questions:

- What would help your family cope better financially?
- What changes are needed so your family can plan for your future support?
- What would make it easier for your family to learn about financial planning?

7. Setting standards so that we can keep making supports and services better

Groups that provide supports to people who have a developmental disability have to be accountable. That means they have to show that they are doing a good job.

Right now, the government has service contracts with groups that provide supports. The contract means that the groups promise to do what they said they would do. They also have to give the government regular reports.

The government is looking for new ways to make sure that groups who provide supports do a good job. One way would be to set standards. The government would only work with the groups that meet the standards. The standards would also help people who pay for their supports directly.

Questions:

- How could you and your family help to set standards?
- How could you and your family help to make sure that groups meet the standards?

Extra questions you can answer if you want to:

- How could people who pay for supports directly use the standards?
- How should the government check to make sure that groups meet the standards?

What else would you like to say

Is there anything else you would like to say that you have not already told us?

How to have your say

Talk about these questions with someone you trust.
Write your answers down together.

You can send your answers by email to:

dstransformation.mcss@css.gov.on.ca

Or

You can mail your answers to:

Developmental Services Transformation Feedback
Developmental Services Branch
Ministry of Community and Social Services
4th Floor, 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9

Or

You can fax your answers to:

(416) 325-5554 or toll free to 1-866-340-9112.

Please send your answers by June 30, 2006.

We will likely get a lot of mail, so we will not be able to write back to you. But we promise to read all of the answers and think about each one with care.

Thank you for helping us!

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